

the good issues, run on the high road, and be able to find good candidates and finance them, and we can keep moving this country forward.

Don't you ever forget—you go home tonight—12 million people have jobs because we changed the economic policy of the country; 186,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers did not buy handguns in the last 4 years because we changed the policy of the country; 12 million working families got to take a little time off from their jobs when they had a sick parent or a sick child without losing their jobs because we changed the direction of the country. And I could go on and on and on.

What you do makes a difference in the lives of people you will never meet, you will never know, who could never afford to be here tonight. That is the unique role you occupy in American democracy. I am very proud of it and very grateful to you and deeply determined to keep this country and our party moving in the right direction.

Thank you for your support. Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:23 p.m. at the Corcoran Museum of Art. In his remarks, he referred to glass artist Dale Chihuly, whose work was displayed at the museum.

Remarks at a Townhall Meeting on Education in Clarksburg, West Virginia May 22, 1997

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mary Helen. She said she was nervous, but I thought she did a great job, didn't you? Terrific.

Thank you, Bob Kittle, for hosting us here, Leon Pilewski, the principal, and all the faculty here at Robert Byrd High School. I thank Governor Underwood, Mrs. Underwood, Governor Caperton, the other State officials for being here, the legislative leaders, the local school officials.

The congressional delegation did want to come, but the Senate is voting today on the balanced budget amendment. I'll have a little more to say about that in a minute. But I kind of wish Senator Byrd had been able to come here, especially to this school, but he and your other legislators have put their duty first, and I respect that, and they're where we all want them to be.

I'd like to thank your State superintendent of education, Hank Marockie, for being here, and recognize the president of the State board of education, Cleo Mathews, who's here because not only is she the president of the State board of education but her daughter, Sylvia, is the Deputy Chief of Staff to the President. And that's a nice little walk from Hinton, West Virginia, so I thank them for being here. Cleo, thank you.

I thank Mayor Flynn and others for making me feel so welcome in Clarksburg and all the communities along the way where the people came out to say hello. But mostly I want to thank all of you in this audience for joining me to talk about education, about the plans that you have and the plans that I have to make education better, and especially the importance of high standards, to give our children the knowledge and skills they will need to seize the opportunities and meet the challenges of the 21st century.

I came here in part because of the great progress you are making in the national movement to raise academic achievement. In 1996, the State of West Virginia tied for third in the Nation in improvement since 1992 in the mathematics performance of fourth and eighth graders. You should be very, very proud of that.

I want to thank Governor Underwood for supporting this educational effort, and I want to thank my former colleague, with whom I served for many years, Gaston Caperton, for making education his top priority here in West Virginia, among other things, making West Virginia the Nation's leader in putting technology in schools.

I believe you either now have or soon will have computers in every single one of your elementary schools in West Virginia. That is something you can be very proud of—that, the distance learning work you've done. And I want

to tell you all, if you don't know, in addition to being on public broadcasting here in West Virginia and whatever else the networks choose to pick up tonight, we are live on the Internet in West Virginia and across the country. So you're in cyberspace, and I hope you're having a good time there.

For the last 4 years we have worked very hard to advance our goals in education to make sure all our children are ready to learn; to make sure that they have good basic skills, from expanding Head Start to the Goals 2000 program, which West Virginia has used; to have grassroots efforts to raise academic performance; to our school-to-work program, to help the learning of young people who don't go on to colleges but do deserve to have good access to further training after high school; to open the doors of college to all Americans.

The balanced budget agreement that I reached with the leaders of Congress provides for the largest increased investment in education in a generation. If the Senate adopts it—the House has already adopted it by a better than 75 percent vote; if the Senate adopts it, that's what it will do. It expands Head Start, moving toward our goal of a million kids in Head Start by 2002. It funds our America Reads program, designed to mobilize a million volunteer reading tutors across America to ensure that every 8-year-old in this country can read independently by the end of the third grade—very important in a country that is as diverse as ours is becoming.

We have 4 school districts in America where there are more than 100 different native ethnic linguistic groups. That's a stunning statistic. But everybody has to be able to read in our common language of English, so this is very important.

We also have the largest increased investment in higher education since the GI bill was passed at the end of World War II; a HOPE scholarship tax credit for families, designed to make 2 years of education after high school as universal as a high school diploma is today; tax deductions for the costs of all tuition after high school; and the biggest increase in Pell grants in 20 years. It will add 300,000 more people who are eligible for the Pell grant program, something which will be especially helpful in a State like West Virginia.

In addition to that, we have funding to try to follow your lead to make sure that we can connect every classroom and library in the

United States to the Internet by the year 2000. But the most important thing of all in our education program, I believe, is the effort to develop national standards and a national measure of whether those standards are being met, because from West Virginia to Nevada, from Washington State to Florida, from Maine to Arizona, math is the same; the need for basic reading skills are the same.

I called in my State of the Union Address for national standards of excellence in basic learning, not Federal Government standards but national standards, starting with fourth grade reading and eighth grade math and reflected in examinations which I would challenge every school, every State, every student to participate in by 1999.

I have proposed that these exams be based on the only widely accepted national standards-based test we have today, called the National Assessment of Education Progress. When I just said that West Virginia ranked third in the country in progress and performance in math tests, that is based on your students' performance on the so-called NAEP test, the National Assessment of Education Progress. But today we only give those tests to a sampling of students in States, and we only know what either the State scores are or in some cases the district or regional scores are. So we have to do this for the whole Nation.

Today I am pleased to announce that Governor Underwood, along with the State board of education and the State superintendent of education, has agreed that West Virginia should participate in these examinations in 1999. And I'm grateful to him, and you should be proud of it.

In addition, Massachusetts and the National Alliance of Business are endorsing our call for national tests. West Virginia, Massachusetts, the National Alliance of Business joined several other States and other groups in the growing national consensus for standards. And I am very, very encouraged.

Let me also say that, you know my native State of Arkansas has a lot in common with West Virginia. In the 1980 census, we were the two States with the highest percentage of people living in the States who were born there. And we also have had to struggle with low incomes and an economy that was not easily changeable to meet the demands of the modern world. And

I'd like to think that we believe that our children are as gifted as children anywhere and that if we give them high standards, good teaching, and good parental support and good support in the schools, they can do as well as students anywhere in the world. So again, Governor, thank you. And thank you to all the educators. We're going to do this, and it's important.

Now, before we open the floor to questions, I thought you might be interested in just seeing what these exams are like. So we'll go through a question or two, just so you'll get the feeling for what a fourth grade—we'll start with the fourth grade reading exam, and you'll see why this is important. If you have a standards exam—it's not like giving an exam in class where somebody might grade on the curve and two people can make an A and everybody else has to make something lower. Standards-based exams are designed to assure that everybody can pass, but to pass, it means something. It means you know what you need to know. So no one is supposed to fail, and this is not designed to put any school, any student, any group down but to lift us all up. The tests are designed so that if they don't work out so well the first time, you'll know what to do to teach, to improve and lift these standards.

But it's very important to understand the difference between a standards-based test and normal grading, where you expect somebody to make 100, somebody to make 60, and everybody to be in between. With the idea of standards, you want everybody to clear at least the fundamental bar.

So let's look at the charts here. Chart one describes the fourth grade reading test, and the standard performance is divided into three categories. Basic performance means that a reader can recognize most of the words, identify the most important information. The next level is proficient; in addition to that, you can summarize the passage, find specific information, and describe the way it's presented. Then an advanced understanding would be that you could provide a more detailed and thoughtful explanation. And I'll give you an example of that by asking one of your students to join me. Hannah Galey, who is a fourth grader from Nutter Fort Intermediate, is going to come forward. Hannah is going to read us a passage from "Charlotte's Web," a wonderful book I'm sure a lot of the adults here read with your children when they were little.

Hannah? Give her a hand. [Applause]

[At this point, Hannah Galey read the passage.]

The President. That's wonderful. That's great. Give her a hand. [Applause] You were great. If we were giving a read score, she would be double advanced, you know. [Laughter] Thank you.

Now, here's the way the question would work for a fourth grader: "Based upon the passage you just read, how would you describe Charlotte to a friend?" And then these are three possible answers, and you see how they would be graded, based on what I just said. A basic proficiency would be, "Charlotte keeps her promise." That's basic standards. A proficient answer would be, "Charlotte works hard to keep her promise," describing that she hasn't kept it yet, she's working to keep it. And then, an advanced understanding would just explain in one sentence what the whole paragraph was about. "She plans to keep her promise to save Wilbur's life"—what the promise is—"by tricking Zuckerman"—how she plans to keep it—all three things. But you can see if you give—and obviously there are various variations, but the test would be—the answers would be aggregated in three categories like that, so that you would have some sense of how the children were reading.

Now, let's look at chart four, which will show how our fourth graders are doing. Again, this is the National Assessment of Education Progress. This is the reading version of the math test that I just quoted that West Virginia was third in the country in improvement on. Given to a representative sample of fourth graders in America, 40 percent did not do as well as saying, "Charlotte keeps her promise"—could not say that's what this was about.

Now, you know, some of these young people may not have English as a first language, but a lot of them do and still are not reading at an advanced enough level. That is why it is so important that we provide in every community an army of trained reading tutors to help support the parents and support the literacy efforts under way and support the schools.

Thirty percent cleared the first hurdle: "This is about Charlotte keeping a promise." Twenty-three percent were more proficient; they knew it was her plan, she was outlining her plan. Only 7 percent of the fourth graders went as far as saying, "She plans to keep her promise to save the life by tricking the man." You see?

So it shows you that ideally we would like 100 percent at advanced, but at least we need 100 percent at basic or above. And so the idea of giving the exam would not be to identify failures but to show schools and school districts how well children are reading based on what they understand so that everybody would reach a certain understanding. That way their performance in all subsequent grades would improve. A lot of children have the mental capacity to do very well in school and fall further and further behind because they didn't get the comprehension they needed early on.

Now, I want to show you one other chart, and we'll come back to this at the end of the program. This is a sample eighth grade math test, so ask yourself this question—no answer forthcoming now: A car has a fuel tank that holds 15 gallons of fuel. The car consumes 5 gallons of fuel for every 100 miles. A trip of 250 miles was started with a full tank of fuel. How much fuel remained in the tank at the end of the trip? And there are four answers: $2\frac{1}{2}$ gallons, $12\frac{1}{2}$ gallons, $17\frac{1}{2}$ gallons, 5 gallons. We'll come back to that at the end of the show. That's designed to hold viewer interest out there. [Laughter]

So that's basically what these standards tests are designed to do. I wanted to come here and talk about that because West Virginia has not only proved that you can have a big increase in teachers' salaries, which is wonderful; one of the best student-teacher ratios in America, which is wonderful; the most aggressive plan to put computers in elementary schools in the country, which is terrific and helps to reinforce standards learning; but you're also showing that you can raise standards and today, with the Governor's statement, that you want to do more.

So with that, I'd like to hear from about any of these educational matters you would like to discuss, questions you'd like to ask, statements you'd like to make, and we'll go back to our leader here, Mr. Kittle.

Thank you.

Mr. Kittle. We're ready now to do the town-hall meeting, so we're ready to open for questions for the President.

The President. Here's some over here.

Mr. Kittle. Over here?

The President. Yes, over there. And there's some there.

[David Hardesty, president of West Virginia University, asked the President to identify the impediments to the adoption of national standards.]

The President. I think there are two major barriers, from what I've heard. The first is a political one; the second one is a deeply personal one, almost.

The political one is sometimes when people say "national standards"—and Secretary Riley and I have to deal with this all across America—when people say "national standards," they say, "I don't want the Federal Government setting standards for my school." That is not what this is about. All the Federal Government proposes to do is to fund the development of the tests to measure whether the standards are being met.

The National Assessment of Education Progress tests, which you participate in, was developed by educators, academics, and other experts. The Federal Government is not running this test. We are not telling you that you have to participate in it. The whole thing is voluntary. But I believe every State will want to be a part of it when it is obviously a process that has integrity, that will help our children.

So the first thing is we have to tell people, this is not some attempt of the Federal Government to take over your schools. We have done a lot in our administration to get rid of a lot of the Federal rules and regulations associated with grant programs, to try to give local school districts more flexibility as long as they were developing academic standards that they could hold themselves accountable for. That's the first thing.

The second thing—big problem, I think, is it's scary. It's personal. You're afraid. What happens if you take it, and you don't do very well? And I think the important thing there is that we are not—we want all of our children to take it, but we're not necessarily trying to identify the specific score of every student, but we want the schools and the classes to see how they're doing so they can lift the students up. I don't want anybody's score published in the paper or anything like that. This is not an instrument of failure; it's an instrument of accountability and a pathway to success.

But I can tell you, when you look at other countries with which we're competing for the high-wage jobs of tomorrow—huge issue in

West Virginia, now, for years—I was looking at the topography of West Virginia, which looks like about half of Arkansas, you know, all these mountains and how beautiful it is. For years, it made it hard for you to diversify your economy. You had coal in the ground, but it was hard for people to get here and do other things, and it slowed up the diversification of your economy and kept your wage levels too low.

The explosion of technology will mean that many kinds of work can be done anywhere in America and anywhere in the world. And it both gives you an enormous new opportunity but a much higher responsibility to lift your education level. So we've got to get people over the idea that they have to be scared of how this thing comes out.

No matter how bad it is, once you get a roadmap, it will be better next year, and it will be better the year after that. And all the evidence is that children do better with higher expectations. To me those are the two things. If you can confront those two things head on, go out here and tell the citizens of West Virginia the Government is not trying to run a testing program and take over your schools, number one; and number two, don't be scared of how it comes out, because it's going to make us better in the long run.

Mr. Kittle. Okay. Time for the next question. Let's take one from this group over here.

[A participant asked if schools would receive increased funding for reading specialists at the elementary school level.]

The President. What's the answer to that, Secretary Riley? Yes? Yes, he doesn't have a microphone. Secretary, just tell him what you just said. [Laughter] This is something I'm very proud of. I'll give you the intro. In addition to the million volunteers we're going to try to get to support you, those of you who do this at a higher level of skill on a full-time basis, we are also going to provide—that's what he was about to say.

[Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley responded that the President's America Reads initiative provided Federal funding for reading specialists to work with selected students.]

The President. Twenty-five thousand extra reading specialists, so that should put one in every school.

Now, let me ask you something. You say you're a reading recovery teacher, and have you had great results with it? You know, the reading recovery program revolutionized literacy in the whole nation of New Zealand——

Secretary Riley. Absolutely.

The President. ——and is probably the most consistently effective reading program that any of us know about. It's more intensive, and it's more expensive. And what we're trying to do is to create a network where, in effect, people like you can be at the center of a hub that reaches out, that included reading specialists and all the volunteers, so we'll have enough hopefully to cover what every child needs.

[Donna Rose, a teacher at Lost Creek Elementary School, described the reading program at Lost Creek, its emphasis on parental involvement, and the long-term improvement in student scores. She gave credit to the Title I funding and the flexibility permitted by the program and asked if the President was working on similar programs for the future.]

The President. Let me say, first of all I thank you for what you are doing because I think it's very important. It's the most important thing, especially with the parents being involved. One of the things that we have done that I'm most proud of is the way we redid the Title I program, because when we got here, Secretary Riley and I got here and we had been Governors living with the Title I program for years, we thought it was really selling our lower income children in our poorer school districts short, basically creating a two-tiered system of education. And instead, we tried to organize it so that you grassroots teachers could use it to lift the performance level of children who were covered by Title I, and I think that's what you've done, and I'm very thrilled by it.

What we're trying to do now, in addition to what we've just been talking about, on the standards—first we want to increase the availability of preschool education so that more kids will come to school prepared to learn. Secondly, we want to try to do what we can to support the literacy programs in the schools. We explained that.

And then we've taken the basic education programs that we have on the books now in this balanced budget plan and tried to continue or dramatically increase the funding of as many

of them as we could. We are particularly interested in trying to help enhance math and science education and, as I said earlier, trying to accelerate the movement of computers and connection to the Internet and good educational software and trained teachers in every classroom in America. And that's a big part of this program.

So I hope that all those things together will make a significant difference when we finish this work over the next 4 to 5 years.

Mr. Kittle. Let's take a question from one of the students now.

The President. You've got a bunch of them. Your choice.

Mr. Kittle. Let's take the one here on the front row, on the left.

The President. We'll take both of them. Go ahead.

[Jennifer Brown, a fifth grade student at Simpson Elementary School, voiced her concern that funding for art, music, and theater programs had been cut, and asked if the President would ensure that the programs remain in schools.]

The President. Wonderful. Well, first of all, let me say that historically, the main support for arts and education out in the country from the National Government has come through programs like the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, because most of the big money coming from the National Government to the schools has come to schools that have basically low tax bases because of low income, or to students with special needs. And the idea was that if the Federal Government gave extra money to poor schools or gave extra money to students with special needs because their costs were higher, then the States and the localities would be able to keep up the rest of the programs.

There has been an alarming decline all over America in the arts and music programs and, I might say, in the athletic programs, apart from the big school teams. And I think it's a serious mistake, because we now know that a lot of young people develop their intellectual capacities in different ways, different kids learn in different ways, and that we really are significantly eroding the future of certain segments of our children if we deprive them of access to the arts and music and, even if they're not varsity football or basketball players or baseball players, to other sports.

But we don't—except through the National Endowment for the Arts, we've done some things that benefit public schools. We don't have direct programs to do that because we spend all our money on other things. But I must say, I personally believe it's a mistake for schools to cut back on it. And when I was a Governor, I tried to dedicate enough funding to these purposes, to try to offset it, even though usually the decisions about the curriculum are made completely at the local level. I think that may be the problem, that all schools from time to time have financial problems. And it may be that because there's not a specific funding stream for a lot of these programs, they're more likely to be left undefended.

I think the best way to keep them is for you and students like you to point out that you think it's an important part of your education.

Ashby Hardesty. Mr. President, my name is Ashby Hardesty, and I'm a fifth grader from Nutter Fort Elementary School. I was wondering if you use the Internet in the White House.

The President. We do.

Secretary Riley. All right.

The President. But my daughter uses it more than I do. *[Laughter]* We access the Internet in the White House, and we also have extensive E-mail. But my speechwriters use the Internet. They can do research on the Internet; they pull up articles and things. We use the Internet for all kinds of things.

When I become curious, I can always go down to the Vice President's office, because he's a bigger expert than I am, and we have interesting environmental discussions based on things he pulls up for me on the Internet. But the White House uses the Internet quite a lot.

Mr. Kittle. Okay, let's hear from one of the parents over in this section.

Jim?

Jim McCallum. Mr. President, welcome to West Virginia.

The President. Thank you.

[Mr. McCallum, a member of the West Virginia Board of Education, asked the President's opinion on extending the school year.]

The President. I have always thought if you could afford it, it was a good thing to do. I think that the only major industrial country with a shorter school year than we have, that I'm aware of is Belgium, and I'm not quite sure what the historic reasons for it are. But Belgium

does have a shorter school year than we do. Every other nation in the world with an advanced economy has a longer school year.

And as you know, basically the American school year was developed around an agricultural society when all of the children had to get off and help their folks in the fields. A lot of our more overcrowded school districts now are now open year-round. They just operate on three trimesters, and the students have to go to two of three trimesters. And obviously that reduces by a third the amount of new school construction they have to do, although it costs more, obviously, to operate the schools and pay the personnel.

I think on balance it's a good thing to do. I think that—let me just say what we're learning already from the NAEP tests and other things. In math—what we're learning in mathematics for example in the higher years is that our students may skip over a large number of subjects and touch a large number of subjects, for example, in advanced mathematics. But our competitors in East Asia and in Germany, for example, may study slightly fewer subjects, but because they're in school longer, they go into much greater depth, which means when they get out of high school, they carry a higher level of capacity with them.

So if you are going to lengthen the school year, I would say the first thing you ought to do is bring educators and others in and say, "Well, if we went to school longer, what would we do with the time?" I mean, you don't want the kids to get bored. In a lot of States like our home State, every time we talked about lengthening the school year, they would tell me about how many schools weren't properly air-conditioned and we would have the teachers and the kids passing out and all that kind of stuff. It's very unpopular, lengthening the school year, but I was always for it. I just think you need to analyze—and I think you get more support if you say, "Here is what we would do if we went to school a week longer. Here is what we would do with that time. If we went to school 2 weeks longer, here is what we would do with that time." And then, of course, you have to figure out how you're going to pay for it and what kind of offset you get with questions like the young lady asked here about already having cutbacks in other things.

On balance, do I think it would be better if we had a slightly longer school year? I do.

[*Bill Sharpe, president pro tempore of the West Virginia Senate, asked the President if the national standards would emphasize the importance of writing.*]

The President. First of all, let me say I do not—if I were in a different line of work, for example, if I were the superintendent of schools here like Mr. Kittle, or if I were the State superintendent of public education, I would not say that we should only have high standards in reading for fourth graders and math for eighth graders. It's just that this is the—we have to make a beginning somewhere as a nation, so I'm trying to get us to make a beginning as a nation with this in 1999.

I would have—we already have an enormous amount of work that's been done, for example, by the science teachers to have national standards in science. And National Geographic has spent a fortune to work with geography teachers to develop national standards in geography and teaching materials for it. And there are national standards in civics. And there should be standards in reading and language, generally, that go from the fourth grade to the eighth grade. And there ought to be—and one in high school, perhaps 10th grade. And in my dream world, before too long, we would have this fourth grade reading test and this eighth grade test replicated in elementary, junior high, and high school in several areas, and then all the schools in the country could pick and choose about what they would participate in.

Obviously, if you went to the eighth grade, and certainly in the high school, you would want a writing sample as well. I'm interested in—more and more of the college application forms you see a lot of you—I'm sort of into this now, as a lot of you know—[*laughter*]*—*are requiring young people to write an essay to get into college. And I think it's a very good thing. So I would agree that writing and the measurement of writing capacity should be a very important part of a national standards program once you move beyond the fourth grade into junior high and then on into high school. It's very important that young people be able to express themselves.

Mr. Kittle. Let's move back to this side.

The President. What were you going to say? Secretary Riley wants to say something. Talk to him about our summer program, Dick.

[*Secretary Riley discussed Read Write Now, a summer program designed to encourage young*

people to read and write every day in the summer.]

Mr. Kittle. Let's move on to the back row.

The President. While she's taking the microphone back there, Senator, let me say one other thing.

Senator Sharpe. You have the floor, sir. [Laughter]

The President. There is a lot—and you probably know this—there is a lot of educational research that shows just as some young people learn better when they're exposed to music and the arts, there are some young people whose learning increases exponentially, even if they're not particularly literate at the time, when they begin to write, and they begin to write stories of their own life and stories of how they want to—so it triggers their imagination in a way that nothing else quite can. So I think it's very important that this be taught, even before it's tested.

[Parent Jim Eschenmann asked what additional measures could be taken to protect students from the harmful areas of the Internet, while guaranteeing full access and protecting freedom of speech.]

The President. Well, you know, I signed a bill—when I signed the telecommunications bill, which I believe will create hundreds of thousands of jobs in our country along with the agreement we've made to open telecommunication competition in the world to American products and services—I had a provision in there to try to protect against young people being exposed to some of the harmful things that are on the Internet, not just pornography but, as I'm sure a lot of you know because of the events in the news in the last couple of years, there are even instructions on how to build bombs and things like that. There are a lot of things on there that we wouldn't want our children to see.

That provision has been thrown out by a court and is still in the courts, I think. So it may be that what we have to do is try to develop something like the equivalent of what we're developing for you for television, like the V-chip, where it's put in the hands of the parents or the educators. And then if it were in the hands of the educators, the school board could approve certain guidelines.

It's technically more difficult with the Internet. As you know, there are hundreds of new services being added to the Internet every week. It's growing at an explosive capacity, and we're in the process actually of trying to develop an Internet II. But I think that is the answer. Something like the V-chip for televisions. And we're working on it. I think it's a serious potential problem myself.

But let me say it would be a serious potential problem if they were not in the schools. I think putting them in the schools, because the kids are normally under supervision, you have a far less likelihood that the Internet will be abused or that the children will be exposed to something they shouldn't see during the school hours, in all likelihood, than at home. But I do think you need guidelines in both places, and we're doing our best to try to figure out if there's some technological fix we can give you on it.

[Jeremy Thompson, a national merit scholar finalist from Bridgeport High School, asked if the President thought students should have to pass a national exam to graduate from high school and what would be the minimum levels in English, math, and science.]

The President. Well, New York, for many years, has had a Regents exam that you actually had to pass to get a full-fledged high school diploma. And I believe that Louisiana, several years ago, adopted an 11th grade exam that you had to pass to go into high school. When I was Governor of our State, we passed a requirement that you had to pass an exam in the eighth grade to be promoted to high school.

I basically believe that it would be a good thing if you had a standard—an exam like this, not one you have to make a certain score on but one you have to show certain competence on, to move to different levels of education. If one were being given in high school, I would like to see it be given in the 11th grade so it could be given again in the summer so young people can go on to their senior year. Or if it were a condition of a diploma, it should be given very early so it can be taken at least twice more. Because if you give an exam that you have to make a certain score on or show certain competencies on to get a diploma after you've been put through 11 years of school, I think you ought to be given more than one shot.

But I think that generally, if we can move to standards-based education so that every young

person in America can stand up and make the statement about their early education that you just made, then it would be a good thing to have certain benchmarks along the way so you would make sure that if you were sending somebody to that next level, they really could do the work.

Otherwise, you can really, I think, hurt a lot of young people. There are so many young people—there's lots of evidence that a lot of young people have difficulty in high school years because they never got the basic skills they needed in the early years. And they get sort of typed as being inadequate, as if they don't have the intellectual capacity to do it, and the truth is that way over 90 percent of us can do way over 90 percent of what we need to do in any given field of endeavor, given a proper level of preparation, the proper level of support, and a proper level of effort. So I would like to see something like that, but if you did it in the high school before graduation, I think we would have to start it early and give everybody more than one chance to pass.

[Janet Dudley-Eshbach, president of Fairmont State College, indicated that college presidents have difficulty devoting 50 percent of their work-study dollars to the America Reads program and asked if the President would be open to alternatives such as community service learning programs.]

The President. Number one, absolutely; and secondly, let me make it clear what we asked to be done with work-study. We have not asked anybody to devote half of their work-study students to America Reads. What we did do is to say, last year we increased the number of work-study students by 100,000 over the next couple of years, in our budget last year—by 200,000, excuse me. In my new budget, we put another 100,000 in there so that within a matter of 3 years, we'll go from—nationwide from 700,000 work-study students total to a million. What we really were shooting for is to get 100,000 of the next 300,000 into reading tutoring. We were urging the colleges, if they could, to, in effect, give up that number of hours of students working on campus to work in reading.

So we're not trying to get anybody to give up half their work-study students. And so you could more easily calibrate kind of what your share was, if you wanted to participate, but there is no mandate on that.

Secondly, I would love it if you did it that way, because another thing I'm trying to do, that we emphasized at the Summit of Service in Philadelphia with the former Presidents and General Powell and I sponsored at the volunteer summit, is that I hope that every college in America will start giving a credit for community service and will try to channel all of its students into community service. So if you did it that way, I would be elated.

You just have to make sure—let me just say, you just have to make sure, and I'm sure our reading teacher over here would say that you just have to make sure that you've got enough time to give the minimal training to do what needs to be done, and that in this—whatever you have to do to get the credit, they'll be spending enough time with one student or two students or however many to really do the kids some good that they're helping.

But I would love that, because I think every—I'd like to see every college in America follow your lead and give students credit for doing community service.

[Parent Patricia Schaeffer asked how the utilization of technology could ensure access to quality education for all children.]

The President. Well, I can tell you what we're doing. What we are doing is to—let me get my brace out of the way here. Let me tell you what we're doing. We have provided some money in each of the next 5 years in our budget to go to States to try to put, with help we get from the private sector and any money that the States want to put in, to try to make sure that all the schools get covered.

Frankly, the principal beneficiaries of this should be the most rural schools and the poorest inner-city schools, because of a lot of the other schools are going to get computers just in the normal course of events. And the whole program will be a failure if we don't hook it up to all the rural schools.

When we started this, when the Vice President and I started this, we went out to California a couple of years ago and hooked up 20 percent of the classrooms in California in one day. And we got all those high-tech companies in Silicon Valley to do that. And then we went to New Jersey and highlighted what they had done there to turn around a district that was in trouble.

My whole idea was that this would make it possible, if we did it right, for the first time in the history of the country for kids in the poorest urban districts and the most remote rural districts to have access to the same information in the same way in the same time as the students in the wealthiest public and private schools in America. I mean, if we do this right, it could revolutionize access to learning.

So I think you've got to get the computers out there, but secondly, we have to make sure the teachers are trained, and third, we have to make sure that the software is good.

So the answer to your question is, my goal is going to be to see that—every State is going to have to have a plan, and that's how we put the money out.

Go ahead.

[Secretary Riley noted the administration's support of the Federal Communications Commission decision to approve a discounted Internet rate for schools in low-income areas.]

The President. You understand what he's talking about? The poorest schools can have—we'll make it as close to free as we can to hook on to the Internet, which will make a big difference, because a lot of our schools were worried about getting the equipment, the software, and everything else and just not being able to afford to stay hooked up. But the E-rate that the Federal Communications Commission approved will be a 90 percent discount for the poorest schools in the country and an average 60 percent discount. So that should mean that everybody out in the hills and hollows of north Arkansas and West Virginia should be able to afford to keep wired up.

[Pina Price, owner of a tax business, mentioned the President's plan to give parents a tax credit for the cost of their children's college tuition.]

The President. That's right.

[Ms. Price asked if it was going to happen and if the President had considered giving new graduates a tax break for student loans.]

The President. The answer to your question is, yes, it is going to happen. And the only question is—we haven't actually passed the actual tax bill through the Congress yet, but we have allocated roughly \$35 billion over a 5-year period to provide tax relief against the cost of college education.

And we know that, among other things, there will be a tax credit, that is a dollar-for-dollar reduction off your taxes, for the first 2 years of college for an amount that will be roughly equal to the cost of a typical community college. So you can take that just off your taxes as a tax credit. Because our goal is to try to make 2 years of education after high school as universal as a high school diploma is today.

If you look at—the last census figures we have in 1990 show that young people who have 2 years of—younger workers, now, it's not the same for older workers—but younger workers who have 2 years of education or more after high school tend to get jobs with rising incomes. Young people who have less than 2 years of education after high school tend to get jobs with stagnant incomes. Young kids who are high school dropouts tend to get jobs with declining incomes. So it would be a tax credit.

In addition to that, there will be a tax deduction from your taxable income for the cost of any tuition after high school, not just the first 2 years, any tuition—the second 2 years, post-graduate, vocational, any tuition after high school.

Now, beyond that, what we tried to do to help young people when they come out is for the schools that are in the Department of Education's direct college loan program, young people have the option of choosing to pay back their loans—they have big loans—either on a regular repayment schedule, which would be hard for them, particularly if they have become school teachers or police officers or nurses or something else where they're not making a lot of money. They have the option of paying that back as a percentage of their income, which lifts a huge burden off of them in the early years. So we've tried to do that. But the main focus of our efforts in this tax bill will be the tax credit and the tax deduction. But the details of it are still somewhat open because, obviously, Congress hasn't acted. And Secretary Riley and I talked about it on the way up here today, what we could do that would do the most good for the largest number of people.

[Parent Katherine Folio asked what the President planned to do for the gifted student programs, under the new education program.]

The President. Support them. You want to talk any more about that, Secretary Riley? Support them. I think they should be supported.

[Secretary Riley stated that the goal of the standards process is aimed at educating students in the same way that gifted kids have been taught. He noted that one of the advantages of gifted student programs was to offer advanced placement courses and college credits.]

The President. The more factually accurate answer to your question is the one Secretary Riley gave. Just about all we do for gifted education is to support advanced placement, and we're going to promote more of that. But philosophically, I strongly support it. I do believe—and let me say when I was Governor of my State, we actually put it into our academic standards that every district had to offer special opportunities for gifted students. And we actually had a funding stream in our education formula for it. So I'm strongly committed to it.

But I think the larger problem in American education is that we've given up on too many of the other students. Because I believe—I'll say again, I believe more than 90 percent of the students are capable of learning way over 90 percent of what they need to know to keep this country in the forefront of the world and keep their opportunities the richest in the world in the 21st century and that what we really need to focus on is lifting our sights so that everybody can stand up and make the speech this young man did when they get out of high school.

I do strongly support gifted programs, but I think as a nation, what we need to do is to say the school districts and the States should fund those gifted programs, we should support nationally advanced placement, but the main thing we ought to do is be lifting the sights of all of our children.

[Jim Archer, a production manager at Northrup Grumman, asked the President what steps could be taken to help parents and teachers be more open to vocational and technical education.]

The President. The first thing we should be doing, in my opinion, is asserting that the dividing line between vocational education and academic education in the world of the future is an artificial dividing line. If anybody doubts that, they ought to just take a random tour of factories in America today and see how many factory workers there are running very complex machines with computer programs and a thousand other examples that you well know.

I can only tell you what we have tried to do and what I think we should do. The reason I pushed the development of this school-to-work program when I became President is that I had seen the same sort of thing you were talking about, on the one hand, and on the other hand, I had seen young people who were in vocational programs very often not getting the level of vocational training they needed because it's much more sophisticated now.

So what we decided we ought to do is to bring the business community, in effect, into the schools and bring the students into the businesses and let young people make up their minds and let young people who chose, in effect, a kind of vocational option to do it in a way that they would know was not closing future doors. If they decided they wanted to go to a 4-year college later on or they decided they wanted to pursue a different career later on, they could do it.

That's the whole idea of school-to-work, is to set up a partnership between the employers in the community and the schools so that the idea of working and learning are—these ideas are compatible, not two different things, and so that if young people decide they want to go into the workplace, they will have an adequate amount of training to be worth enough to you so that you will give them a decent income and they can earn more as they go along and they're not foreclosing the option of taking a different path if, after a few years, they want to go back and go to school.

I think that a lot of the things that I have to do involve, well, do we have the right program, you know, do we have the right kind of incentives to go to college? Well, a lot of it is just making sure we're thinking right about this, because most of the decisions made every day by Americans are not made by anybody in Government, they're made by all the rest of you. So it's the way we think about these problems very often that determines whether we accomplish them.

And if you look at the level of work being done at Northrup Grumman and any number of other companies today, it is a very foolish and outdated idea to have this old-fashioned dividing line between this is academic and respectable and this is vocational and not quite as good. We need to abolish the line, and that's what our school-to-work program has tried to do.

Mr. Kittle. Mr. President, in closing, would you like to go back to that sample math question, give us the answer, and explain how the United States students are compared to students in other countries?

The President. I think that means we're out of time. [Laughter]

Let me tell you what we always do at these town meetings. I love these. I have not done one in a couple years, but if any of you have questions that you would like to have answered, if you will provide them to the superintendent here, he'll load them all up, send them to me, and I'll write you back, because I think if you come here with a question, you're entitled to get an answer. I wish we had more time.

But let's do the question, let's go back to this. Here's the eighth grade question, okay. If the car has a fuel tank that holds 15 gallons, and it uses 5 gallons every 100 miles, and it goes 250 miles, obviously it uses $12\frac{1}{2}$ gallons of fuel and there is $2\frac{1}{2}$ gallons left, and that was question A.

But here is the stunning thing. Let's look at the results. Let's go to the next slide. Only 34 percent of American eighth graders got that question right. Fifty percent of Korean eighth graders got it right. Seventy percent of eighth

graders in Singapore got it right. So if you lengthen the school year, maybe you should work on specific math skills.

This has nothing to do with IQ. Nearly 100 percent of all the brains in the world will process this problem. Do not worry about whether we can do this. This is not an issue of whether we can achieve this level of excellence. We can easily do this. We just haven't.

And when we deprive our children of the capacity to do this, then there are all kinds of other processes that they can't absorb, and it blunts their capacity to learn later. So I want to see that number up at about 90, and the only way to do it is to try and to test it. And we can do it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:12 p.m. in the gymnasium at Robert C. Byrd High School. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Helen Shields, senior at Robert C. Byrd High School, who introduced the President; Robert Kittle, superintendent, Harrison County schools; Gov. Cecil H. Underwood of West Virginia, and his wife, Hovah; Gaston Caperton, former West Virginia Governor; and Mayor Robert T. Flynn of Clarksburg.

Remarks to High School Students in Clarksburg

May 22, 1997

The President. Thank you very much. Well, did you see it?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. On the screen and the Internet?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Well, you may have had the better deal, because it's cooler in here. [Laughter] Let me thank Danny Phares for his introduction. And I want to say I'm glad to be here with Governor Underwood and with Secretary of Education Dick Riley and with Cleo Mathews, the president of the State board of education. And you may have heard me say that her daughter, Sylvia, who is here today, is my Deputy Chief of Staff in the White House and she graduated from high school in Hinton, West Virginia.

So I think that's a pretty good statement of West Virginia's education quality. And I have to tell you, I did not have an auditorium this nice when I was in high school. I love this school. Congratulations on having a beautiful, beautiful school.

You heard the townhall meeting—I'm just going to come down here and shake hands with anybody who wants to come down and say hello. But I just want to say one thing to all of you. We are about to enter not only a new century but a new millennium, literally a time which happens once every thousand years. By coincidence, you are also entering a period in our history which will be very different from the past, different in the way people work, different in the way people learn, different in the way people relate to each other. And it can be the